

BIG DAKKA FOR HIRE

When it comes to exploring the Blackstone Fortress, you can never have too many guns. Fortunately, there's a mercenary for hire who's got a very large weapon indeed. He is the Ork Flash Git known as Skarburn Zapdakka. Just hope he's aiming it at the enemy ...



Last month, we introduced two new retinue characters for Blackstone Fortress – the Ogryns known as the Broggan brothers. This month there's a new mercenary in town – the notorious Flash Git Skarburn Zapdakka. This trigger-happy Ork is available to recruit for your expeditions, and his snazzgun will no doubt prove immensely useful when your adventurers are confronted with hordes of hostiles. But first you've got to find him. It's rumoured that Zapdakka was last seen marauding around the Blackstone Fortress hunting for loot, but no one knows quite where he's wandered off to. You must follow the trail of broken bodies and spent ammo casings if you're going to find him. Over the next few pages you'll find Zapdakka's character card, along with an exclusive mission that you'll need to complete in order to recruit him to your expedition. Good luck!

'Where's da loot?' Zapdakka lifted up the humie soldier in his massive paw-like hand and shook him back and forth a bit. The man moaned weakly as he regained consciousness, then began screaming in pain when he realised his left arm was missing at the elbow. Zapdakka shook him a little harder.

'Where's da loot?' he growled again in broken Low Gothic. He'd picked up a few humie words back on Precipice, but so far he'd had little success using them. The man forgot his pain for a moment and stared wide-eyed at the green face barely a foot in front of his own. Broken fangs jutted from a bucket-like jaw that was criss-crossed with old scars held together with rusty staples. One beady eye full of malicious cunning stared back at him, the other a crude bionic that whirred as it tried to focus. The traitor Guardsman's eyes grew wide, glazed over, then rolled back as he passed out once again. Zapdakka growled, threw the limp body to one side, reloaded his snazzgun, and stomped off into the darkness in search of shiny stuff.

RETINUE CHARACTERS

WHAT ARE RETINUE CHARACTERS?

Retinue characters represent characters who, while not being the central protagonists of the Blackstone Fortress story, still play a part. These individuals may be hired – or otherwise persuaded – to accompany the explorers into the fortress. In the game, they can be fielded in addition to a full party of four on an expedition into the Blackstone Fortress. As they are less inclined to act on their own initiative, they are not controlled by one player but by whichever player is the leader that turn, moving and fighting as directed by that player. Incredibly useful for any party of explorers, retinue characters have their own unique weapons and sometimes unique actions, lending their strength to the group and allowing the explorers to overcome obstacles they would otherwise find impossible.

Retinue characters were introduced in the Blackstone Fortress: Escalation expansion. The first, a combat Servitor designated X-101, was discovered in the fortress itself, and once rescued, gave the explorers a powerful asset – an unquestioningly loyal companion they could bring on their expeditions to fight against the minions of Mallex. This article introduces new retinue characters for you to use, including background that explains how these particular characters came to the fortress, a reference card for each character, and rules for how you can win them to your cause – a necessary step, as most of them will not be waiting around gathering dust like X-101!

Adding More Retinue Characters

Precipice is populated by a diverse collection of individuals. Representatives of many different facets of Imperial life have found their way to the station, along with members of dozens of different alien races. This has allowed us to pick some great Warhammer 40,000 miniatures and present them as retinue characters so that you can use more models in your games of Blackstone Fortress.

Of course, these followers won't just cheerfully join your crusades into one of the most mysterious and dangerous locations in the known galaxy for no reason! To recruit these fighters to your cause, you must first succeed in a unique quest. Completing this quest not only allows you to pick these characters for future expeditions, but also tells the story of why they are on the Blackstone Fortress and how your explorers came across them.

Retinue Character Rules

To use these retinue characters, follow the rules below.

When starting a new expedition, one retinue character can be chosen to accompany the explorers. Some retinue characters have conditions which must be met to recruit them; the explorers must achieve these before that character can be picked to accompany the explorers. A retinue character is treated as an explorer in all regards with the following exceptions:

- A retinue character does not have an initiative card and is always controlled by whoever is the current leader. Retinue characters are activated immediately after the leader's own explorer.

- A retinue character can never use destiny dice.

- Retinue characters do not use activation dice. Instead, their character card will tell you how many actions (and what actions) that character can take each time it is activated. A stunned retinue character takes one fewer action in a turn in which it stands back up. Retinue characters suffer wounds and grievous wounds and are taken out of action in the same manner as explorers.

- A retinue character can never have discovery or resource cards. If a rule or ability would cause a retinue character to receive a discovery card, the leader receives that discovery card instead.

- Retinue characters can never receive any cards that are given as rewards. If a reward would be given to a retinue character (because, for example, they slew a specific enemy or achieved a certain goal), that reward is instead given to the leader.

SIDEQUEST

An expedition to recruit a retinue character can be undertaken as a one-off expedition before, after, or even during another quest. If you begin this expedition whilst on another quest (such as the quest for the hidden vault or the quest for the Black Shrines), do not treat this expedition as part of the quest you are currently undertaking – that quest is placed on hold, using the following rules:

- During this expedition, discovery cards cannot be drawn for any reason.
- There is no Legacy or Trading step when the explorers return to Precipice.
- No cards, counters, or tokens are drawn, placed, or added to the databank to affect the amount of time the explorers have to finish the quest that is currently on hold. Menace counters and legacy cards are good examples of this. Those cards, counters, and tokens that have already been drawn, placed, or added to the databank are, however, still in use – the forces of Chaos are relentless, after all. This means, for example, that the cumulative penalties from the menace tracker will still affect this expedition during combats.
- Cards and equipment that would go in an explorer's stasis chamber at the end of a session's play remain in use and affect explorers as normal.
- Once the explorers have completed this expedition, these rules cease to apply and the explorers can continue once again with their quest.

Running Out of Time: The Search action, and equivalent actions that discard discovery markers (such as Daedalus' Omniscan ability), cannot be used in a quest to recruit retinue characters.

SKARBURN ZAPDAKKA

Skarburn Zapdakka is a Flash Git, an Ork who took to the stars to earn his fortune after he was forced from his original tribe for his swaggering bluster. The life of the Freebooter suited Zapdakka, and for several years he fought under the renowned mercenary Kaptin Deffdreg. After each battle, Zapdakka spent whatever loot he had acquired on upgrades for his treasured snazzgun. However, the Flash Git's incessant desire to assess the results of the latest tinkering with his weapon got him into trouble on the dust world of Ghorovow. Zapdakka blasted apart a group of gold-robed humans, only to find out they included the renegade commander who had drawn Kaptin Deffdreg to Ghorovow, seeking firepower to support his ill-fated insurrection.

Zapdakka had always believed he was destined for greater things and took his ejection from Deffdreg's ship as a sign from Gork (or possibly Mork) that the time was right to strike out on his own. While touting himself as a gun for hire on the frontier station of Farvast, Zapdakka heard tell of a distant fortress where loot lay in great drifts in the corridors, protected by ancient machines and snarling beasts. The ambitious Ork knew the timing of these rumours was not coincidence – it was his destiny to find and loot this apocryphal fortress.



It was months before a ship docked at Farvast that was headed for the fortress. The *Aurea*'s captain was heading to the Western Reaches to escape the vengeance of a powerful group of creditors. Zapdakka was able to gain a place on the trader's ship through a combination of bribery and intimidation. The *Aurea*'s journey to the area of wilderness space in which the Blackstone Fortress lay was fraught with danger, and Zapdakka found plenty of opportunities to enhance his reputation for getting the job done through overwhelming application of firepower. On arriving at Precipice, the Flash Git took the first opportunity to join a group of mercenaries heading to the Blackstone Fortress. Within hours, each of the others had been cut down, either by the fortress' denizens or by errant snazzgun fire. Zapdakka himself roamed the tessellating corridors seeking the priceless item of loot that would seal his reputation. If any other group of adventurers from Precipice wished to secure the Freebooter's services, they would need to prove they would be able to lead him to the motherlode.


SETTING UP AN EXPEDITION TO RECRUIT SKARBURN ZAPDAKKA

Set up the expedition as described in the *Blackstone Fortress: Rules* booklet, but with the following changes:

During Step 2, Skarburn Zapdakka cannot be picked as a retinue character.

During Step 12, the leader reads aloud the following text instead: **'You alight from the maglev chamber, hoping to locate Zapdakka and convince him to join your cause. You hear the concussive sound of heavy firepower echoing from a nearby chamber and push towards the Flash Git's location.'**





SKARBURN ZAPDAKKA

RETINUE CHARACTER

"You're paid for dakka, not dakka your gonna get."

Move: 2

Defence: ▲

Agility: □


Vitality: ▲

Size: Huge

WEAPON ACTIONS

Weapon	Range		
	1	2-3	4+
Snazzgun ¹	▲	□	▲

¹**Unbridled Firepower:** When this retinue character makes this weapon action, draw line of sight to the target, then make an attack roll against each explorer and hostile in each hex through which that line of sight was drawn (including the hex which contains the target).



SKARBURN ZAPDAKKA

RETINUE CHARACTER (INSPIRED)

"Dakka my way now, or you'll get some dakka too."

Move: 2

Defence: ▲

Agility: □

Vitality: ▲

Size: Huge

WEAPON ACTIONS

Weapon	Range		
	1	2-3	4+
Snazzgun ¹	□	▲	□

¹**Unbridled Firepower:** When this retinue character makes this weapon action, draw line of sight to the target, then make an attack roll against each explorer and hostile in each hex through which that line of sight was drawn (including the hex which contains the target).

SPECIAL RULES

Waaagh! Do not roll activation dice for Skarburn Zapdakka. Instead he will take up to three of the following actions in any order and combination: Snazzgun, Move, Recuperate. If there are hostiles visible to him, he must take the Snazzgun weapon action.

Dakka! Dakka! Dakka! After Skarburn Zapdakka's turn is over, roll the Blackstone dice if he made any Snazzgun weapon actions. On a 1-3, apply 1 grievous wound to Skarburn Zapdakka. On a 16-20, take the Snazzgun weapon action again.

Huge: Other explorers cannot share a hex with this explorer.

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Dakka! Dakka! Dakka! After Skarburn Zapdakka's activation is over, roll the Blackstone dice if he made any Snazzgun weapon actions. On a 1, apply 1 grievous wound to Skarburn Zapdakka. On a 20, take the Snazzgun weapon action again.

Huge: Other explorers cannot share a hex with this explorer.

SECRET AGENDA

This explorer kills two hostiles with a single weapon action (taking an explorer out of action with a weapon action counts as killing one hostile to determine if this retinue character inspires).

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STRONGHOLD

ZAPDAKKA'S RAMPAGE

The Freebooter Skarburn Zapdakka has gone on a greed-fuelled killing spree. Only an explorer with wealth to spare can hope to catch this loot-obsessed maniac's attention long enough to strike a deal.



ACCESS ROUTE

This expedition is one combat, set up as shown here. Place Skarburn Zapdakka's miniature in the hex marked Z.

HOSTILE GROUPS

- 1** 7 Cultists (C)
1 Cultist Firebrand (FB)
- 2** 4 Negavolt Cultists (NC)
7 Traitor Guardsmen (TG)
- 3** 4 Spindle Drones (SD)
4 Chaos Beastmen (CB)

STRONGHOLD RULES

Lootin' Frenzy: This rule replaces the Waaagh! Rule on Skarburn Zapdakka's character card for this stronghold. Do not roll activation dice for Skarburn Zapdakka. Instead use the following sequence to determine his actions each turn.

Skarburn Zapdakka will take three actions when he activates. If he cannot make the Loot action, he will make a Leggit action, and if he cannot make a Leggit action he will make the Dakka Dakka action. He will activate after the leader each turn, after any retinue characters. The hostile player (or the leader if there is no hostile player) rolls the dice for and moves his miniature.

- **Loot:** If Skarburn Zapdakka is in the same hex as a discovery marker, remove that discovery marker from the battlefield and place it next to his character card.
- **Leggit:** Skarburn Zapdakka makes a Move action towards the closest discovery marker.
- **Dakka Dakka:** Skarburn Zapdakka makes a Snazzgun weapon action (use the Inspired side of the character card when resolving the Snazzgun weapon action) that will target the nearest hostile or explorer. If there is a choice, the hostile player (or the leader if there is no hostile player) chooses the target.

SIDEQUEST TABLE

ROLL	EVENT
1	'Avin' da Best Time: Skarburn Zapdakka makes one Snazzgun weapon action, one Loot action and then makes one Leggit action.
2-3	Unfulfilled Destiny: Do not make a destiny roll at the start of the next turn.
4-6	Not Dead Yet: The leader must pick one hostile that was slain during the combat and has not returned to the battlefield, and then deploy them as close to an explorer as possible.
7-10	Changing Conditions: Draw an encounter card. If the card has a twist, it applies for the rest of the combat. If not, there is no effect.
11-14	'Avin' a Good Time: Skarburn Zapdakka makes one Loot action and then one Leggit action.
15-17	Inspiration: The leader picks an explorer. That explorer receives 1 inspiration point.
18-19	Heroic Effort: The leader picks an explorer that is out of action. Deploy the explorer in the same hex as another explorer or as close to another explorer as possible, and then make a vitality roll for them. If no explorers are out of action, the leader picks an explorer. Make a vitality roll for that explorer.
20	Lucky Find: The leader picks an explorer. That explorer draws a discovery card.

VICTORY

If all explorers are out of action, if there are no discovery markers on the battlefield, or if Skarburn Zapdakka is out of action, the combat ends in the following event phase. If, when the combat ends, all the explorers are out of action, or Skarburn Zapdakka has 3 or more discovery markers next to his character card, this stronghold is failed and must be attempted again. Otherwise, the stronghold is conquered and Skarburn Zapdakka is available to be picked as a retinue character in future expeditions.

